

(TMI Focus, Vol. XIX, No. 3, Summer 1997)

BLAZING NEW TRAILS WITH MONROE AND CASTANEDA

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Since the fall of 1994, I have been facilitating a monthly Explorer Support Group (ESG) in Boulder, Colorado, for a group of people interested in widening their perspective about consciousness in nonphysical realities. A prerequisite of attendance is being a graduate of TMI's residential programs and/or the *GATEWAY EXCURSION* Weekend. At the explorers' suggestions, for these meetings I have been using an approach which combines the works of George Gurdjieff, Carlos Castaneda (apprentice of Don Juan), Ken Eagle Feather, Victor Sanchez, Joseph McMoneagle, and Robert Monroe. In that there are many similarities between the works of these people, this format provides a wide variety of ways to approach consciousness education and training. This has kept things lively and fun. The ESG format has been twofold. First, we do exercises that explore the topic for the meeting; then a guided Hemi-Sync experiential activity reinforces the topic. This results in a spirited, freeflowing discussion.

When developing the classes, I decided to follow the Don Juanian idea of differentiating between what the Toltec tradition calls first attentional, second attentional, and third attentional viewpoints when developing the class schedule. The first attentional state has to do with experiences in physical reality such as C-1 consciousness, Focus 3, and Focus 10. The second attentional state involves experiences in non-physical reality such as Focus 12 and beyond, and the third attentional state incorporates both physical and nonphysical reality or states of 'free perception,' known as the unitive or mystical states, such as Focus 15.

For the first six months we did exercises combining the work of Monroe and Castaneda which enhanced first attention skills. These were activities to learn how to "undo" habits, routines, self-importance, and ego beliefs that limit or drain the flow of energy and to learn how to develop an attitude of impeccability (the strategic control of behavior to save, direct, and increase energy). The latter techniques included special REBAL (Resonant Energy Balloon) techniques to increase or release energy, learning how to develop a Different Overview (D/O), exploring the idea that we are primarily fields of energy more than physical bodies, and learning how to release static energy encrustations in the field through the use of recapitulation (Castaneda) and the Release and Recharge technique (Monroe). Various tapes from the

GATEWAY EXPERIENCE® (GE) series and some TMI quarterly membership tapes were used.

In the last year we have centered on building second attention skills by exploring Eagle Feather's eight attentional skills of consciousness: talking, reasoning, feeling, dreaming, seeing, will, first reflexive, and second reflexive (described in his book, *Travelling with Power*). We went on to practice stopping internal mind chatter using creative Energy Conversion Box techniques and Castaneda-type activities found in Sanchez's book, *The Teachings of Don Carlos*. This permitted more of what Gurdjieff calls 'self-remembering,' or what Monroe would refer to as letting the Total Self make choices. In the last four months we have done exercises that purposefully increased and/or oversaturated attention. This automatically leads one into a state of heightened consciousness. During these exercises, the explorers became very aware of their emerging instinctual body wisdom abilities such as developing and using third-eye vision. Some of the exercises employed to shut off physical reality attention were observing shadows, walking backward, staring at a bright color, and using peripheral vision rather than looking straight ahead—all activities described by Sanchez.

One of the most impactful events for the explorers was to understand the difference between thinking and perceiving. To this day they still mention how powerful this is. They learned that talking and reasoning make use of thinking. Thinking and perceiving are two entirely different attentional states, but we have been taught to lump them together as if they were identical twins. Thinking belongs to what Don Juan called the first attentional state (called the tonal state in Toltec terms) and perceiving (the nagual) belongs to second and third attentional states. Don Juan continually stressed the importance of making the distinction between thinking and perceiving. He suggested that when thinking is stopped, the idea of the physical world stops, along with physical identity and all that was constructed from and about that identity. If we stop thinking such and such, then the world will stop being that which we have thought. If we shift attention into a wider perceptual field, then the world takes on broader meaning and helpfulness. From this understanding the explorers discovered three key insights: (1) if used in a disciplined manner, the Monroe Energy Conversion Box exercise can be used to literally stop self-importance—which is the biggest energy drain of all; (2) rather than immediately inserting left brain "foot" into Focus-state work, it is more important to be a perceiver, not a thinker, while in Focus state experiences; and (3) it is more important to not think while feeling a feeling. If there is thinking going on while feeling a feeling, the feeling energy will grow into emotional thought-form energy, or what Robert Monroe and Don Juan both called "encrustations" (blocked areas in the energy field). Don Juan suggested that one couldn't have an emotion without thinking about a feeling. Feelings are sensations having no thoughts attached. The first step in the Monroe *Release and Recharge* exercise in tape four of Discovery (GE) is to release emotional thought forms. The second step is to release stuck feeling energy forms.

We have started to take our monthly ESG meetings outdoors to reap the benefits of full and new moon energies. The group enjoyed a camp-out weekend in the Rocky Mountains while practicing night vision (Castaneda third-eye training) on the gnarly desert land and had more Focus-state experiences at 9,000-feet elevation. Assisted by Mother Earth, joyous hummingbird, sneaky/noisy black bear, riots of wildflowers, soaring eagle, great food, and sweet bagpipe songs, these EXPLORER meetings are likely to be remembered for a long time.

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